

SENATE EDUCATION

Exhibit No. 5
Date 2/18/15
Bill No. SB 328



18 February 2015

RE: SB 328 – College Savings Accounts

Distinguished Members of the Senate Education and Cultural Resources Committee:

On behalf of the Women's Foundation of Montana, I urge you to pass Senate Bill 328; the Education is the Best Bet Savings Account Program.

Evidence suggests that designated college savings programs, like the one proposed in SB 328, produce financial benefits for both students and families. At the Women's Foundation of Montana, we fund programs and initiatives that support economic self-sufficiency for women and a brighter future for girls. With this mission in mind, the Education is the Best Bet Savings Account Program falls squarely in line with the future we strive to create.

We recognize Montana women face significant financial challenges and college is often the factor that can mean an economically secure life. Whether as a mother or as a student-saver, the proposed program provides the opportunity for Montana women to plan for their own financial future. Studies have shown that college savings programs like the Education is the Best Bet Saving Account Program have impacts that stretch broadly, increasing family financial literacy and creating brighter economic futures for generations to come.

Designated college savings give families the opportunity to imagine, plan, and think about their child's future in a framework beyond high school, fostering a college-bound attitude. This attitudinal shift is paramount to student success. As families begin to talk about college, students begin to see this future as an achievable and expected reality. Designated seeded savings have impressive results, even for small dollar savers. Studies show that children with college savings of \$1 to \$499 are 2.5 times more likely to enroll and 4.5 times more likely to graduate from college than a child with no savings account.

We believe that programs like the one proposed in SB 328 open doors that may have been previously shut to Montana students, and are excited for what the impacts could be for women and girls. Montana's investment now in the education of our children can mean big savings in the future. Please pass this bill so more Montana families can begin setting expectations and start saving for their children from the very start.

Sincerely,

Jen Euell
Program Director, Women's Foundation of Montana
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